

AMATEURADIO

News of the Amateur Radio
and Amateur Satellite Services

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DISASTER DRILLS

Keeping Radio Amateurs Prepared for the Real Thing

TORRINGTON, Conn. — Tonight, while most everyone is settled in for the evening after a day's work, the amateur airwaves will be bristling with activity. Disaster will strike suddenly, severing virtually all means of communication and plunging the area into darkness.

But a group of volunteer Amateur Radio operators, stationed at their radios in various locations across Litchfield County, will not be kept off the air. Using portable equipment and auxiliary power to operate, the amateur operators will be busy passing emergency messages in and out of the affected area.

Tonight's disaster, like many in the past, will not be real, and the drill is only for practice. But the threat of disaster remains. Most remember the tornado of October 1979 that settled uninvited near Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks. Or the blizzard a couple of years before that prompted former Governor Ella Grasso to close down the state for two days.

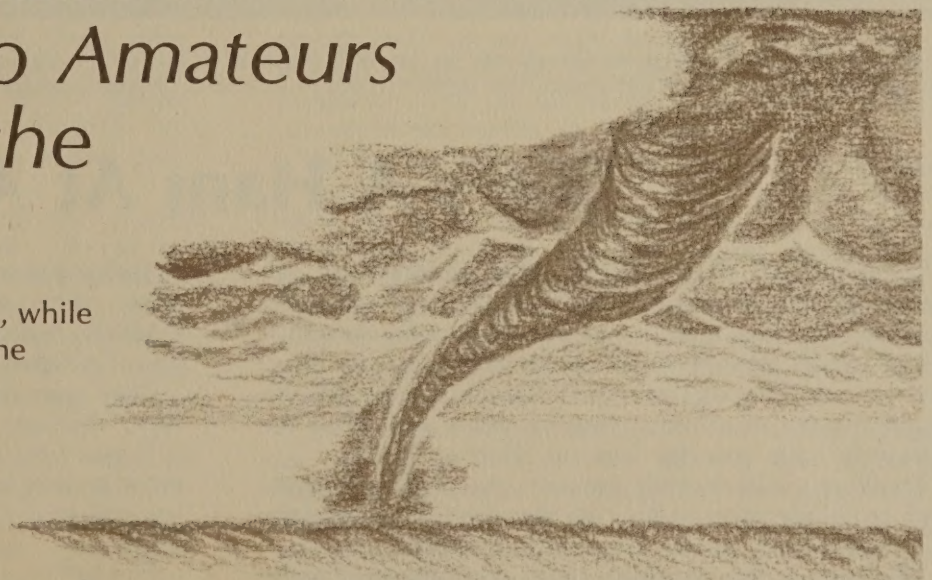


illustration by Gail Downs

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On these nights — in drills regularly and routinely conducted by about 40 members of the Northwest Conn. Amateur Radio Emergency Service — technical knowledge, operating skills and equipment are brought into play on a practice basis against the day they may be needed.

Robert Koczur of Torrington, a District Emergency Coordinator appointed by the American Radio Relay League, heads up the emergency communications network.

"What we're striving to do," explains Koczur, "is provide communications in times of emergency and also to provide communications services to various agencies that might need them."

Since his appointment in 1980, Koczur, a self-employed tool design engineer, has been organizing the

amateur network throughout the 18 towns that make up his area, which is roughly the northwest corner of the state.

Koczur says that this is the first time the northwest part of the state has had such an emergency service. "We're available to provide or supplement communications in the event of weather disasters, major fires, search and rescue operations and evacuations," he said.

Under the guidelines of the ARRL, which authorizes the establishment of the state and local units of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service, the services of the volunteer members are offered free of any charge and are for the discretionary use of established emergency units such as state and local police, civil defense, fire departments, and national organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army.



Robert Koczur, District Emergency Coordinator for the ARRL and head of the Amateur Radio Emergency Service in northwest Conn., listens as members of the county-wide communications network check in for one of the group's regularly-scheduled drills.

She's A Ham At Age 8

LONGWOOD, Fla. — While other children her age were watching "Sesame Street" and playing with dolls, Bethany Wait was learning to be a ham radio operator.

She spouts off definitions for words such as continuous wave and propagation, and talks about Federal Communications Commission requirements and what the different radio operator licenses allow on the air.

The 8-year-old recently became one of the youngest ham radio operators in the country when she passed the FCC test for her Novice class radio license.

"Bethany is the youngest radio operator ever to be licensed in Orange County and is probably one of the five youngest in the U.S.," says Albert Huber, president of the Orlando Amateur Radio Club. Bethany, a third-grader, is now a member of the Orlando radio club, which claims to be the largest in the Southeast with 443 members.

"I didn't get to play as much as I usually did and watch television shows that I wanted to at times, but it's worth it," Bethany says about the time she spent studying and working for her license.

Bethany says her mother, also a ham operator, winces every time she says her newly-acquired callsign, KA4WRJ, which translates phonetically as Kilo-Alpha-Four-Whiskey-Romeo-Juliet.

"My mom doesn't like me having whiskey in my call-sign," Bethany says with a giggle, "but it's my callsign."

It was her father, though, who helped Bethany the most on her way to a license, after she told him she wanted to be a ham so she could "meet people far away."

Her father, a veteran ham operator himself, taught his daughter all he knew about international Morse code, basic radio theory, rules and regulations and operating procedures. Even when the family went on trips, Bethany's father would bring along the Morse code keyer so she could practice the dits and dahs of the international radio language.

"It's nothing really special," Bethany says of her getting a license at such an early age, adding that anyone who works hard can get a license. "But it's still an honor."

— Sharon Carrasco, *The Little Sentinel*

They Bring Their Own Dimension To The Hobby

There are some 400,000 licensed Amateur Radio operators in the United States today. Most of them — the great majority, in fact — are men. Fewer than one out of every 10 amateur operators are women.

Once a rarity, women are still a minority in the ranks of Amateur Radio. Men have dominated the hobby from its infancy in the early 1920s, not only in numbers, but also in shaping its future. Part of the reason can be attributed to the technical foundation on which the Amateur Radio Service is built.

Early amateurs were experimenters, innovators — not so much by choice as by circumstance. They had to build their own equipment because none existed. And going wireless required some basic technical know-how, something that most women were not prepared for or apt to readily acquire.

The few independent women who disregarded the social mores of their day and dared to brave the new communications frontier have generally gone unnoticed in history, having been overshadowed by the Marconis, the Edisons and the Alexander Graham Bells.

And if some early information on radio amateurs in the U.S. is believed, there were no women in Amateur Radio before 1946, despite accounts to the contrary.

In recent years, however, developments in Amateur Radio have opened some doors for women, enabling them to make inroads into a hobby that traditionally has been a man's domain.

While the ratio of men to women in Amateur Radio remains terribly disproportionate, significant changes have been taking place. Since 1961, for example, the number of women getting into the hobby each year has steadily risen, while the percentage of men has appeared to have leveled off. According to a recent survey, 14 per cent of the newcomers to Amateur Radio since 1978 were women, which is more than triple the rate in 1961.

In that same survey, which was completed in 1980 by the Institute for Social Research at Florida State University in Tallahassee, it was found that while a vast majority of women amateurs said that relatives — such as husbands who were already licensed — were important influences in their decision to get a license, they came into the hobby with their own ideas of what being an amateur meant.

Although women amateurs are generally less active than men, they do spend more time on emergency communications and developing operating skills than their male counterparts who devote more time to experimenting and building and repairing equipment.

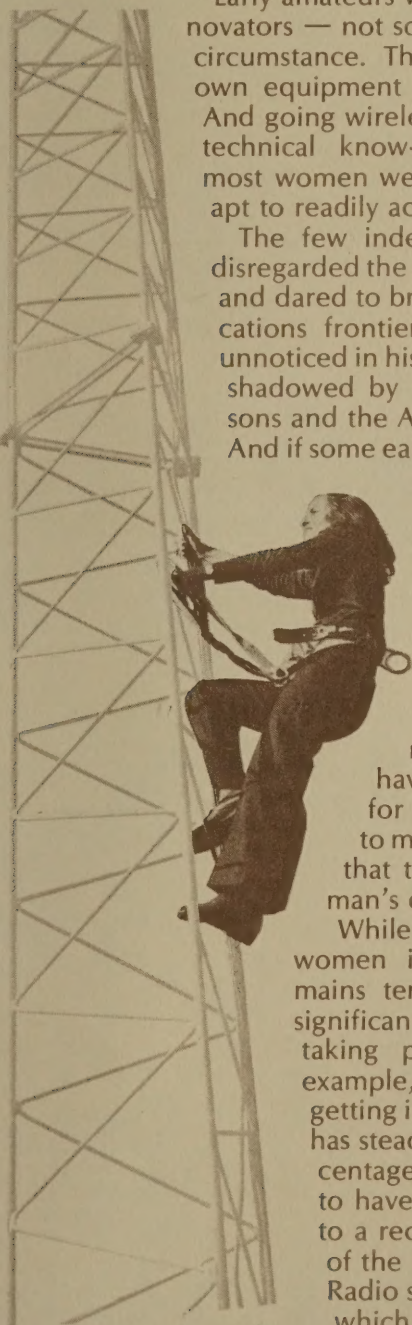
As much as technology may have been a nemesis for women in the past, today's technology may be helping women get into Amateur Radio. Equipment is compact, readily accessible and easier to use, all of which lend themselves to successful operation for the inexperienced operator. And while women amateurs as a whole haven't yet given up their spatulas for soldering irons, a great many more of them are getting involved in the technical aspects of the hobby than ever before.

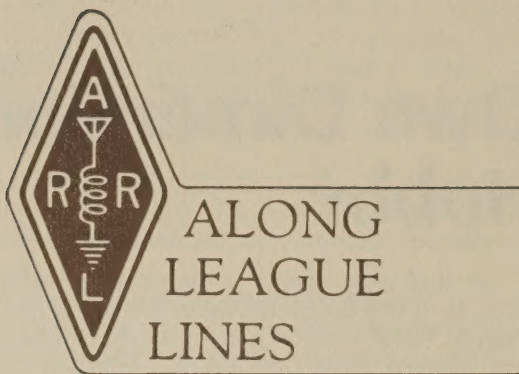
Organization has also been a boon to the woman amateur. Of particular importance is the Young Ladies Radio League, a national organization for women amateurs. What began as a social club in 1939 has over the years become a viable force in Amateur Radio that is recognized internationally. Aside from being a forum for women amateurs, the YLRL sponsors many worthwhile programs, such as scholarships for women pursuing careers in electronics-related fields.

But it is the local radio club and not a national organization where the views of the woman amateur are most often heard. According to the survey, women are more likely than men to regularly attend local, general-interest club meetings, where they are also more apt to express their opinions on Amateur Radio matters. For most of the women amateurs who were surveyed, the club was also a place they went for help when getting started in the hobby.

What impact women will have on the hobby is a matter for continual discussion. But there is little doubt that Amateur Radio is an integral part of their personal lives. What may have started for some as a way to share a part of a spouse's life or as a diversion from a career for others has developed into an exciting opportunity for women to learn new skills, meet new friends and be of service to their community. On that, all radio amateurs will agree.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE AMATEUR RADIO SERVICE? Contact Perry Williams, ARRL's Washington Area Coordinator, and arrange for a personal visit by calling (202) 296-9107.





The radio amateurs' long and hard fight for protection against the ravages of radio frequency interference (RFI) continues on yet another front: home burglar alarms and garage door openers.

Although these devices afford their users the comfort and convenience of modern living, they are the cause of great concern in the amateur community because of their high-susceptibility to RFI. Despite this obvious flaw in the design of such devices, the Federal Communications Commission has decided to allow their operation on frequencies allocated to the Amateur Radio Service.

Safeguards do not exist to resolve the incompatibility of these unlicensed devices with amateur operations. Because amateur activity and the operation of security

and convenience devices are residential in nature and, therefore, very likely to exist near one another, RFI is virtually unavoidable.

One serious consequence is that legitimate amateur operations on the same frequencies as security systems may trigger false alarms, which would increase a problem that now plagues police and fire officials. It also infringes upon the rights of thousands of radio amateurs who should be able to use the frequencies allocated to them without fear of interference.

Too often public service-minded amateurs receive undeserved complaints, lawsuits and abuse resulting from interference caused by the inability of consumer electronic devices to shield out amateur signals. This phenomenon is often a manifestation of consumers' misinformation on interference matters, and is fueled by many irresponsible manufacturers of home electronic systems who promote the myth that the radio amateur is always to blame.

The face of the RFI culprit has changed, but the solution remains the same. What are needed are mandatory RFI standards for the protection of both the consumer and the radio amateur.

Interference problems will probably exist even if the amateur bands are declared off-limits to unlicensed remote-control and security devices. But for the Commission to compound this problem by authorizing operation within the amateur bands is dangerous and not in the public interest.



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